

# worklife

## Steelworkers want more say

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## INTERVIEW: McDERMOTT

The Ontario District of the United Steelworkers of America has endorsed a statement calling for increased employee participation in programs to improve the quality of working life, including a say in the selection of supervisory personnel.

The policy statement by the Steelworkers, adopted at their recent Ontario District conference, is the first by any major union endorsing worker participation in quality of working life programs.

The labour departments of both the Federal and Ontario governments have been promoting the idea of joint labour-management schemes on projects dealing with the quality of working life as a means of reducing worker alienation and increasing productivity.

The Steelworkers expressed their wariness of company sponsored schemes to promote work "satisfaction." "We believe they can often be the instrument to place management's aims in the minds of the workers. This is thought control."

"For honest programs to exist to improve the quality of working life, they must have full participation by employees. It would be hard to imagine such participation succeeding without a union to protect the employees.

The Steelworkers, expressing their desire to expand collective bargaining to cover more of the interests of workers on the job announced that it would be their policy to build into future agreements the following five points:

- Participation in scheduling of hours, organization of work, and workplace rules and procedures.
- Influence in employer policies on hiring, training and promotion to assure equal rights and employment opportunities and to destroy all artificial segregation of workers by sex, race, colour, age, or national origin, and the development of programs that will look after members with physical disabilities.

- Freedom for workers from invasion of their privacy under the pretext of "security" or "protection of property".

- Participation with management on an equal basis as possible in any programs to make work more satisfying, and to give employees more influence in all decisions that affect their jobs, their work environment, their rights and their community.

- Inclusion in bargaining units of supervisory personnel who are eligible under our Constitution and a say at the workplace in the selection of supervisory personnel.



"All this business about the wage bubble (after controls are lifted) is ridiculous, because even the most capricious of us have not said, 'yeah, we're going to catch up and to hell with the public.'"

Dennis McDermott, Canadian Director of the United Auto Workers for the last ten years, may soon be entering a new phase in his 30-year career as a trade unionist. In December, the outspoken UAW leader was given the unanimous endorsement of the executive of the Canadian Labour Congress in seeking election as the man to succeed Joseph Morris as President.

A native of England and a veteran of World War II, McDermott began his tenure with the UAW 30 years ago at the age of 26, as a welder in the Massey-Ferguson plant in Weston, Ontario.

The 55-year old McDermott has nurtured a life-long interest in human rights and international affairs. This commitment has brought him several appointments within international labour organizations. He also has a continuing interest in labour education and history and has served as a lecturer at universities and the Labour College of Canada.

Interviewed at his office in the new shiny mirror-glass building that serves as UAW headquarters, near Toronto, McDermott expressed his candid impressions about trade unionism in Canada, and offered some insight into how he will act if elected the CLC's new president.

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### McDERMOTT'S VIEWS

- On what to expect from labour in the post-controls period:

"Has anyone asked the lawyers and the doctors and the business community how they will act after the controls are lifted? We have as much impact on inflation as a fly on the CN tower. All this business about the wage bubble is ridiculous, because even the most capricious of us have not said, 'Yeah, we're going to catch

up and to hell with the public.' The economic environment is going to take over where the mandatory controls leave off and it's not conducive to successful collective bargaining."

- On an industrial strategy for Canada:

"One of the things that is needed in this is a forum for economic planning where labour would have a voice."

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# INTERVIEW (continued from page 1)

"I don't really care about the semantic terms that are used to describe it. What I'm talking about is meaningful consultation. I don't care if it comes in a bilateral fashion, or a trilateral fashion or whatever fashion."

## • On tripartism and the falling support for the '76 manifesto:

"The manifesto was a new direction which we thought we needed. Tripartism was just a small part of that and I think it was probably a premature idea. A lot of groundwork has to be done before we can get to that stage but (Prime Minister) Trudeau took the initiative and threw the thing out of kilter. It became the subject matter for a lot of idle academics; the media picked it up and the thing got poisoned before anybody really understood what the hell the concept was...."



## • On industrial democracy in Canada:

"By and large, I think that it's nonsense right now. These plans are being imported from Germany and Sweden, where the environment is completely different. The employer here is more traditionally resistant to trade union participation than they are in Sweden."

"What I say in response to this is that before you can let me into the boardroom or the penthouse, let me into the road cellar. Are we going to sit on a board of directors — making decisions about whatever they do — while down the street where we are trying to organize they are cutting our throats from ear to ear?"

## • On being a trade unionist in Canada:

"Here organized labour makes up about a third of the workforce, and in Sweden it is about 97 per cent. Think about that one."

"Here, if you go to a gathering, and people say, oh, you're the labour guy, eh? — out come all the stereotypes."

"But, I have developed a very good defensive technique for that. Now I ask people what they do. If the guy says he is a pharmacist, I accuse him of selling narcotics to teenagers, and of ripping off old people. They quickly get the message about stereotypes."

"It was a good idea that was put to death by a lot of silly people that weren't involved, and that had an effect on some of the affiliates."

## • On the use of economic sanctions to discourage unfair human rights practices (South Africa):

"I was watching the Martin Luther King series last night on television, and it took me back to the days in Selma, Alabama, and Mississippi, and suddenly a little anger started to stir...."

"It's pretty hard to play God in this...But, one thing that I have discovered in my dealings with corporations is that you have to find that nerve centre somewhere and pinch it. Economic sanctions can bring about some bloody marvellous restoration of rights and changes of policy almost over night."

## • On labour as a scapegoat:

"All this talk about wage bubbles and that sort of thing is just horse manure manufactured by the mandarins in Ottawa who are looking for scapegoats instead of solutions. They tried the 'we aren't competitive' routine on us, and we rebutted them on that by destroying the comparability of the data they were using. Then they came up with the wage bubble, and I think we've pricked that one pretty successfully. So now we get the monitoring agency which is a toothless tiger that will do nothing."

## • On Quebec and the national unity question

"Mostly, it's just that we haven't had an appreciation for the unique role that Quebec played in this country. I'm very disturbed about it."

"If you listen to the various distorted reports in the media, you would conclude that René Lévesque is a two-headed monster. We don't believe he is. We think he is a very relevant part of the current scene. He represents a viewpoint that has to be recognized."

## • On being "co-opted" by business and government:

"This is the freaky idea that if you aren't equal in numbers then you are going to be co-opted. I can't think of

a meeting in my life where I was in the majority, but I never felt that I was being co-opted. I think it's just a planned inferiority complex when you say that you can't be effective unless you are equal in numbers. That's nonsense."

## • On his leadership style if elected president of the CLC:

"Joe (Morris) is a bit reluctant about the media — I'm not. I think that I can handle myself in most of these circumstances and I hope to be an effective spokesman on a variety of matters to get labour's viewpoint across. But, I have no illusions about the role of presidency, it is extremely difficult."

## • On the future role of the CLC:

"What I hope to do if elected is to help make the CLC a viable, effective national labour centre that will speak

with one voice on most matters, especially those of national and international interest. I'm not talking about taking away any autonomy — I'm talking to have a consensus that permits the CLC to have a license to say certain things without having a convention every other day."

## • On his accomplishments at the UAW:

"I feel as if I have given the Canadian UAW a lot more visibility and we have won more autonomy. The right to sit at international bodies under a separate, sovereign delegation — the establishment of our own headquarters, away from Detroit, for example. A lot of Canadian affiliates of American unions are becoming more autonomous, and more Canadian in identity. I think that it makes more sense to have that proper balance. We've got the talent here to run our own show."

# OWL FOCUS OF TV SHOW

The Mackenzie division of British Columbia Forest Products Ltd. is one of several sites experimenting with worker participation examined in a CBC television series, scheduled to be broadcast in the near future.

Through interviews with workers, management, labour and government spokesmen, the series will examine several innovative experiments aimed at improving the quality of working life and productivity.

Such experiments involve new methods of management, job-redesign and improving labour-management relations and include things like joint decision-making.

joint-management, profit-sharing and flextime.

In addition to BCFP in Mackenzie, other sites visited in the series include Supreme Aluminum Industries, in Toronto; Labatt's, in London, Ont.; a group of translators in the federal Public Service, in Ottawa; the accounting division of Air Canada, in Winnipeg; and the Maritime Telephone and Telegraph Company, in Halifax, N.S.; Shell Canada in Samia and Hayes-Dana in St. Thomas, Ont.

The five half-hour shows are being produced by the CBC, in conjunction with Labour Canada and Dalhousie University's Institute of Public Affairs.

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"It's the largest man-made lake in the world," our pilot told us as we circled Williston Lake, the aerial marker for Mackenzie and the site of one of the most northerly logging operations in British Columbia.

Named after the famous explorer, Mackenzie is nestled in the rugged B.C. interior, 600 miles north-east of Vancouver. Like many one-industry towns, its 7,000 residents have built their lives around one resource, and here it's wood. The money is good — the average hourly wage is \$9.00, and the amenities of the 13-year-old town are modern and convenient. But it's work that shapes the lives of the people in Mackenzie, and determines whether they love it or leave it.

Mackenzie's first and largest employer, British Columbia Forest Products Limited, has about 1,200 workers on its payroll here, in extensive logging operations, a pulp mill and three sawmills.

Until recently, BCFP's Mackenzie operations were plagued with a high turnover and a rate of absenteeism that had the mills running at much less than capacity. Workers were dissatisfied with their jobs and it showed.

Two years ago, BCFP began an experiment in one of its mills aimed at reducing job dissatisfaction, making its workforce more stable and its operations more efficient. While that goal is not unusual for a profit-minded company, the method that BCFP used to obtain those results were. The plan called for the involvement of management, supervisory staff and workers in "action research" to identify work problems, determine solutions and implement changes that would satisfy all three groups.

"The idea was to get everyone involved in the successful operation of the mill," said Harry Jackson, manager of BCFP's Mackenzie wood products division.

The program began in 1976 and was led by a team of researchers from the B.C. Research Foundation and the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.



George Lambert

Genny Buckley, chargehand at BCFP's Mackenzie division

# Working Things Out in Mackenzie



George Lambert

Harvey Truax, past president of Local 18 of the Pulp, Paper, and Woodworkers of Canada, left, speaking with Harry Jackson,

Following a successful test program in "B" mill, an agreement was made by the union — local 18 of the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada — the researchers and the "C" mill manager to start action research at "C" mill.

The first step in pinpointing the problems in the new, highly automated mill was taken by a Steering Committee set up to oversee the research. It included two representatives from the union (including Harvey Truax who was then its president) two supervisors, and mill manager, John Hards.

## IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

Following meetings with members of all four sections of the mill — sawmill, planer mill, maintenance and production — it was determined that the log infed area at the front of the sawmill was the spot where most of the "downtime" occurred. This was where the flow of work was disrupted, creating frustration among workers and lost production time.

Further meetings between machine operators in the log infed area, and members of the other departments affected by its operation, were led by the mill manager and a researcher to discuss specific recommendations to improve the flow of work, both technically and socially.

Talk then turned to action. One of the major technical improvements made as a result of this joint problem-solving effort was the installation of television monitors at the log infed area. This provided log-deck operators with more control of their machines and established better communication with the interior workers in the mill.

As workers in each department learned more about other workers' responsibilities in the mill, and how they interacted with each other, several interpersonal problems were also solved. Maintenance and production workers, for example, had previously "clashed swords" regarding the time to stop machinery for repairs. After a few meetings together they decided to jointly develop training manuals and procedures to provide operators with

general manager of BCFP's Mackenzie division.

instruction on the basic mechanics of their machinery.

## WORKERS INFLUENCE CHANGE

In the planer mill, where the wood is finished, the problem was the organization of work. Jobs were not effectively rotated, and one key operator's job required more skill and training than the company was allowing for it.

These observations were noted in negotiating the most recent collective agreement and there are now some new patterns of job rotation in "C" mill, to the satisfaction of both workers and management.

Throughout this year-long experiment, many of the workers lost their initial skepticism about job improvement when they realized that they could influence changes in their work environment through the "action research" program.

"What I learned most of all is that things can get done...I got satisfaction out of seeing them done, and out of realizing that I helped make them happen," noted one worker.

"It helped to break down the hierarchy," added Harvey Truax.



George Lambert

John Hards, former "C" mill manager

The process created more on-the-job interaction between workers and supervisors. "We never used to see management on the shop floor, but that's becoming more common now," said Genny Buckley, a chargehand at BCFP's "C" mill and a member of the steering committee.

By improving the flow of work and the conditions of work, productivity and morale improved measurably. Sawmill production steadily increased from 350,000 board feet of lumber per day to 410,000. Absenteeism fell by over 50 per cent and turnover was reduced to an annual

rate of less than 30 per cent — down from 200 per cent only a year earlier.

The safety record at "C" mill has also improved. In 1976 the mill had one of the poorest safety records in the whole company. In 1977, it was one of the best in the B.C. northern interior forest industry.

## HARD TO KEEP GOING

But, as effective and successful as the program was, those involved in it say that there is a continual battle to keep it going.

One of the reasons for this is because researcher Bert Painter has withdrawn from the program, and his role has been assumed by the mill manager. An employee has become a "co-researcher" with the mill manager, but there is now some fear among the workforce of being "co-opted" by management in future collaboration.

While the researcher's continued involvement was seen as undesirable in making the joint decision-making efforts self-sustaining, he was regarded by many workers as a vital catalyst in the process. A key factor in this was his objectivity — being neither a labour nor a management representative.

The time commitment that was necessary to carry on the research, which involved meetings after shifts, or on days off, also became a problem for some participants, especially management.

Since Painter's departure, the Steering Committee at "C" mill has been replaced by a committee made up of the new mill manager (Hards has gone to "A" mill), four supervisors and four workers representing the departments of the mill.

The changes have left some workers feeling that "it was nice while it lasted, but it didn't last long enough."

## TAKES TIME

Obviously joint decision-making at BCFP still has a way to go before it will be truly collaborative, and self-sustaining. But, from their experience, both workers and management at "C" mill indicate that they have a better understanding of the mill's organization, the roles they play in it and how they can act together to improve their workforce.

Both management and the local union seem determined to move forward and to make their new "management style" a way of life. This direction appears to be clearly supported by the employees involved to date.

"It's going to take time, that's for sure. It's like building a bridge. But I think that's the way it will be in the future, and it will be better," predicted Genny Buckley.

This article is a part of a report prepared by Bert Painter of the B.C. Research Council and on interviews with workers and management conducted in Mackenzie in early February by WORKLIFE's Jenny Trappnell.

# A UNION OF WORKING WOMEN

by Barbara Leimsner

What do bank tellers, waitresses, sales clerks and secretaries have in common? They're low paid and mainly women, and they've been traditionally overlooked by the trade union movement. According to federal Department of Labour figures, only 27 per cent of working women belong to unions, compared with 43 per cent of men.

But a small, independent union of less than a thousand determined women has vowed to change all that. The union is SORWUC, the Service, Office, Retail Workers' Union of Canada. They're tackling the monumental job of organizing a "union of working women", concentrating their efforts in the province of British Columbia.

So far, SORWUC has been certified at 41 locations, 24 of them at banks. Seven hundred of its 900 members are bank employees. That is a modest beginning, though, considering there are over 140,000 bank workers spread out across the country in over 7,000 bank branches.

An experimental program now underway in 11 companies across Canada is preventing temporary layoffs and unemployment for almost 700 workers.

The program, called worksharing, is sponsored by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

Under worksharing, a company that would normally lay off part of its workforce because of a fall in production, will now reduce its work week but maintain its workforce; unemployment insurance benefits are used to replace lost wages.

The idea is an accepted labour market policy in Britain, Germany and France. Canada made provisions for its use here, through section 37 of the new Unemployment Insurance Act, passed by Parliament last June.

The first Canadian company to use worksharing benefits to prevent layoffs was the Brunswick Mining and Smelting Corporation, in Bathurst, N.B. Here 300 workers are now working a four-day work week. On the fifth day, the workers — members of locals 5305 and 7085 of the United Steelworkers of America — receive unemployment insurance benefits equivalent to two thirds of their normal daily pay.

Since the Bathurst agreement was signed on November 13, 10 other companies have begun worksharing programs. These range from a manufacturing of mattresses, in Moncton, N.B., employing 130 workers, to a

## GAINING MOMENTUM

But the union is gaining momentum, and is gearing up for a province-wide campaign in B.C. They've even spilled into Saskatchewan and organized the first two branches there. Recently the Canadian Labour Congress put together its own bank employees' organizing committee backed by a \$1 million fund. The CLC-affiliated Canadian Union of Bank Employees

(CUBE) has certified three bank branches in southern Ontario.

How has an upstart union on a shoestring budget managed to organize bank branches at the rate of almost one a week?

"It doesn't cost money to talk to other bank workers," says Linda Read, a bank worker who is on SORWUC's organizing committee.



bank workers are the focus

NFB

"We are all bank workers who know what it's like to work in banks. In other places, people in different jobs are trying to do it for them. Here it's the bank workers organizing themselves."

SORWUC was formed by a group of working women in 1972. It's first certification was approved in 1973 and by the following year, the union represented a small number of social service agencies, day care workers, libraries and several small offices.

The union prides itself on being different from the mainstream of the labour movement. Its constitution was designed to make it as democratic and unbureaucratic as possible. It emphasizes local control. It's two paid staff people are elected from the membership and can only hold one year terms. Most important, it is committed to full quality for women.

In 1976, SORWUC was approached by bank workers who wanted to unionize. An offshoot union, the United Bank Workers, was created and within two months 11 branches had joined the UBW. Then, in the summer of 1977 came the precedent-setting Canada Labour Relations Board ruling that each bank branch constituted a bargaining unit.

From there, the United Bank Workers has mushroomed to its present size, and has shifted tactics now to try to be certified as bargaining agent on

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## WORKSHARING EXPERIMENTS IN CANADA

### THE PROS AND CONS OF WORKSHARING

Critics of worksharing, such as CLC research director Ron Lang, say worksharing is "sharing the poverty, reducing the real incomes of working people".

The Canadian Manufacturers' Association said in a brief last year that worksharing creates "hidden unemployment".

One disadvantage of the scheme that has been pointed out is that there could be the possible loss of pension credits by long-seniority employees who agree to work a shorter week.

The union membership must also consider the issue of seniority rights

in deciding how to act in a lay-off situation.

The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission says the advantages of worksharing are:

- employees get more in wages and benefits than if they were laid off and collecting unemployment insurance benefits,
- the workforce of the company is kept intact, so workers maintain their skills and working habits,
- the employer is saved the expense of recruiting and retraining when production is resumed,
- the unemployment rate is reduced.

clothing manufacturer in Victoriaville, P.Q., employing 720 workers.

Worksharing is established within companies by agreements that are signed by the employees, employer and the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

Employees eligible for unemployment insurance benefits are also eligible for worksharing benefits. The difference is there is no waiting period and the duration of benefits is different.

A major industry in Mahone Bay, N.S. is the most recent company to get a

worksharing agreement with its employees and the employment commission.

Atlantic Bridge Co. Ltd., which regularly employs 77 people in its manufacture of industrial fibreglass pipe products, has a 12-week agreement which gives worksharing benefits to 55 hourly production workers who will work a four-day week. Ten employees were scheduled to be laid off if the agreement had not been approved.

Greg Wentzell, president of local 24 of the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of Canada said the proposal was unanimously endorsed.

"We all decided it was better to stick together, than to see part of our workforce split up. We decided that we could all take a little bit of the blow."

Take-home pay is about \$40 a day at Atlantic Bridge Co. Ltd., so the workers are collecting about \$27 in unemployment insurance on the day they don't work — \$13 less than their normal pay.

Most work-sharing agreements cover situations where there is a temporary work reduction of 20 to 40 per cent, but agreements can be arranged for reductions of up to 60 per cent. The pilot projects in worksharing to date range from 12 weeks in duration to 26 weeks. Four of the 11 companies participating have non-unionized workforces.



behalf of all employees of a particular bank in the province. That means any bank worker who wants to do so can join the union on an individual basis.

"It's a much stronger bargaining unit," says Linda Read. "We're to the point now, with 24 branches, where we think it's possible. And by not applying for certification branch by branch, the banks can't zero in and discriminate against those branches that have organized."

## GRASSROOTS STYLE

Although SORWUC adopted its style of organizing out of necessity, it has proven successful in practice. It's a do-it-yourself, grassroots style that stresses participation by bank employees as a way of building a strong and committed union membership.

Volunteer organizers and support committees have been formed across the province. They distribute leaflets written by bank workers that talk about issues of concern in banks — unpaid overtime, promotions, wages and strikes — and wait for a response.

"A lot of these committees are in people's livingrooms," Linda Read explains.

"A union person from a small town called us to ask for some leaflets, and distributed them in the next town in the B.C. interior...we got three little coupons a week later."

How have the banks reacted to the unionizing?

"I don't know if they take us really seriously yet," says Ms. Read. Although the banks are reluctant to comment on the organizing drive, one Toronto consultant to the Bank of Nova Scotia, Bruce Light, said in an interview that the organizing efforts so far do not mean bank unionization is inevitable.

"No one can say there has been a wave of organizing so far when less than .005 per cent of the industry is organized," he said.

SORWUC argues that unions are essential, especially in providing a grievance procedure against things like unfair dismissal or promotions. Contract negotiations have just begun, and SORWUC members voted to bargain for a starting salary of \$1,140 a month (compared with the present average of \$600 a month), four weeks' vacation after one year, benefits for part-time workers and strong seniority provisions to prevent sex discrimination.

So far, the union plans to stick fairly closely to the home province, and to dig in for a tough campaign. One thing is certain. The largest, and wealthiest employer in the country isn't going to give in without a fight.

Barbara Leimsner is a freelance writer specializing in labour affairs.

# On-the-Job Fitness

story and pictures by  
Pat Hunter



minimal equipment is required for fitness

Paul Faucher looks like an average Ottawa public servant. An employee of the Department of National Defence, Paul is over 50 and he carries traces of a slight paunch around his middle.

But, unlike a lot of workers across Canada, whose jobs and lifestyles make them prime candidates for heart disease, Paul is one of 600 government employees at the Confederation Heights office complex who are getting into shape and staying there. They do it at work, on their own time.

Paul and his fellow fitness enthusiasts are part of a growing trend across Canada that is seeing the establishment of on-the-job fitness facilities in both the public and private sectors.

According to the Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch of Health and Welfare, there are now more than 50 Canadian groups engaged in employee fitness programs.

The employers who are getting into the act include insurance companies like Metropolitan Life in Ottawa; breweries — Labatt's in Halifax, London, Toronto and Edmonton; Bell Northern Research in Ottawa and numerous federal and provincial government departments.

It is a long-term investment with a cost benefit ratio that will show up in 20 years, according to Joe Farley, the director of safety, health and welfare for the Post Office in Ottawa, the main mover behind the Confederation Heights fitness facilities.

## A CASE FOR FITNESS

The short-term rewards are felt most by the employees like Paul Faucher, who says, "I have a lot more stamina since I started this program...I've

been at it for 25 months and now it's a habit with me, even on weekends I don't loaf around anymore, I keep moving and having fun."

The case for employee fitness is the same one Canadians have been hearing since the advent of that proverbial in-shape 60-year-old Swede. However, the problem of an unfit workforce can be expressed in dollars and cents, something employers can relate to.

A recent article in the Financial Times showed that in 1975, approximately 745 million hours of production were lost through sickness, tardiness, fatigue and casual absenteeism. Heart disease alone represents tens of thousands of lost working years to the Canadian employer.

That kind of evidence explains why



Bell Northern's employees keeping in shape

employers have become interested in promoting fitness amongst their employees, but that is useless unless the workers are interested in participating. Many employers would be reluctant to provide expensive facilities that might stand idle.

The easiest way to determine whether there is any interest in a fitness program is a simple questionnaire. Often an awareness campaign on the part of a group combining management, employees, union and medical personnel can spark interest in a fitness program.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in Ottawa is a good example. Employees were invited to take part in the Canada Home Fitness Test. Many were surprised at their results. Requests for a fitness facility in plans for the new Metlife followed, but in the meantime Metlife staff of all ranks showed the sincerity of their requests by steady use of a converted storeroom and carpeted hall for exercising and jogging in their old building.

Metlife's Dr. Ron Garson did a study of 100 employees who took part in a 10-week program, and 100 who did not. The results were positive, absenteeism was down in the active group, and management was convinced enough to provide a large carpeted room with shower and locker facilities in the new building.

There are now more than 200 participants in the Metlife program, representing just over 20 per cent of the staff.

## EMPLOYEE-RUN PROGRAMS

In most cases the successful programs are run by the employees themselves, using volunteer instructors from within their own ranks who have been trained to be fitness leaders at the local YMCA or university, or hired professional fitness instructors paid with funds generated by small yearly fitness club dues. Often the employee leaders receive some remuneration for their time as well.

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# Women in the Labour Force

by Maureen O'Hara

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND PAY ARE STILL THE ISSUES

Wrapped in shawls and kerchiefs, hundreds of poor working women filled the streets of New York on March 8, 1908, marching under banners demanding equal pay, an end to sweatshop working conditions, child-care centres and the right to vote.

"These obscure and anxious women of the poor...did not know they were making history," wrote labour organizer, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

Since that day, March 8th has become International Women's Day, and used by women around the world as a day to speak out and demand their rights. And although women's contribution to the workforce has always been substantial, it is only recently that women have even begun to be recognized for that contribution, in terms of wage parity and employment opportunity.

This month, which marks the 70-year anniversary of International Women's Day, has also witnessed a landmark in the recognition of the rights of working women in Canada with the new federal Human Rights Legislation — which is to be proclaimed March 1st.

Although this legislation only affects those employees under federal jurisdiction (an estimated 10 per cent of all women workers in Canada), it is hoped the legislation will serve as an example for the private sector, said Yvette Rousseau, president of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women (ACSW). The federal Public Service, transportation and communications, crown corporations, grain handling, port authorities and armed forces are covered under the Act.

Section II of the Act, which deals with equal pay for work of equal value, is one major step to aid the nearly four million working women in Canada to overcome the numerous obstacles they face in achieving equality with men in the workforce — of which they comprise about 38 per cent.

## DISCRIMINATION

In Ottawa, the issue of equal pay for work of equal value recently drove

the 25 members of local 31 of the Steel Plate Engravers union to the picket lines. The all-women local said it was striking on the basis of what they saw as discrimination against women employees.

The women, striking at the British American Banknote Company, said male colleagues with similar training and experience were earning four and five dollars an hour more.

The work the women do requires a two-year apprenticeship and is consequently a highly skilled and demanding job. The women said they are only asking for parity with the lowest paid male worker in the plant — a janitor.

"After five years of talking to management about this issue the women have finally gotten fed up," said Maureen McKenney, a union member on the picket line.

The strike was finally terminated when the company and the union agreed that the dispute should be resolved by arbitration.

After nine weeks on strike the women have returned to work and both parties are awaiting the decision of the arbitrator.

Latest statistics from Labour Canada show that the average wage for a woman is less than that for a man in nearly all similar occupations.

In 1974, men's earnings exceeded women's by more than 97 per cent. In 1975 female bindery workers in the printing and publishing industry across Canada were making \$3.89 an hour, compared to \$6.02 an hour made by men.

Women in sales occupations earned 114 per cent less than their male counterparts, and in clerical work the earnings of men exceeded those of women by 54.5 per cent.

## NEW LEGISLATION

Equal value legislation enables comparison of pay rates between women and men working in dissimilar jobs where the jobs involve substantially the same skill, effort and responsibility and are performed under similar working conditions.

Section II of the Human Rights legislation states:

"(1) It is discriminatory practice for an employer to establish or maintain differences in wages between male and female employees employed in the same establishment who are performing work of equal value.

"(2) In assessing the value of work performed by employees employed in the same establishment, the criterion to be applied is the composite of the skill, effort and responsibility required in the performance of the work and conditions under which work is performed..."

## EQUAL PAY CONCEPT

Under the Act, all complaints dealing with equal pay will be referred to the new quasi-judicial Commission and dealt with by its investigators, conciliators and tribunals.



myths about working women prevail

Public Archives

Catherine Skinner, who represented the Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value Coalition at the recent Equal Pay/Equal Opportunity conference sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, explained the concept.

"A day-care worker is responsible for the care and maintenance of our children. A machinist is responsible for the care and maintenance of machinery. Well...machines seem to be more important than children in our society.

"How do you deal with those inequities? That's what equal pay for work of equal value is all about," said Ms. Skinner, who expressed her concern that Ontario has yet to adopt legislation similar to the new federal Human Rights legislation.

Critical factors in enforcing equal pay for equal value legislation include the need for extensive job evaluation systems, effective guidelines for non-existent job evaluation plans, as well as an adequate method to assess job analysis and evaluation systems, said Marnie Clarke, director of the Ontario Ministry of Labour's Women's Bureau.

Ms. Clarke also noted the obstacle of the occupational distribution of women in Canada's labour force, where 63.2 per cent of all female workers are clustered in sales, service and clerical work.

"These occupations have traditionally been under-valued and poorly paid," she said. "The considerable numbers of women available for such employment also creates a large labour pool so that wages tend to remain depressed in these areas."

## MYTHS PREVAIL

Although women make a major

contribution to the Canadian economy, many myths about women and work still prevail.

At the CLC's Equal Pay/Equal Opportunity conference, held recently in Ottawa, Dr. Gail Cook of the C.D. Howe Research Institute, talked about the current attitude that unemployment is a direct result of women flooding the labour market who work not out of necessity or a real desire to work, but rather for "pin money".

Labour facts show that two-thirds of working mothers with children under six had husbands who earned less than \$12,000, and a substantial number of working women are either single, widowed or divorced.



# e report....worklife report.....work

"Even more serious is the extension of this argument to suggest that men ought to have priority over women in filling the available jobs," Dr. Cook said. "If jobs are to be held on the basis of one's ability to do the job, then let us use that criterion consistently for men and women."

Another myth often prejudicing employers who are considering hiring a woman, is that women take more sick leave than men. Labour Canada statistics show that 1.7 per cent of women working full-time were absent from work because of illness in an average week. The percentage for men was exactly the same.

## ORGANIZED WOMEN

Yvette Rousseau, spoke about difficulties facing non-unionized women, at the January CLC conference.

She noted that most women in the Canadian labour force are not union members and tend to earn less than those who are.

"In 1969, 20 per cent of women in the labour force were union members compared to 40 per cent of the men. This is because women are more numerous in the service industries like banks, where unionization is just starting," she said. (See "A Union of Working Women" in this issue.)

Grace Hartman, president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, has pointed out that women are usually last on seniority lists and thus the most vulnerable to layoffs.



female workers are clustered in sales, service and clerical work

photo:thébaud

Speaking about social service cut-backs at a three-day ACSW meeting in January, Ms. Hartman said:

"Traditionally women have looked after the elderly, the sick and children, and consequently it has been women who have suffered most severely from cut-backs in the social services."

At the CLC conference, Ms. Hartman said the Canadian labour movement is finally taking positive action

toward curtailing sexual discrimination in the job market.

## STEPS TAKEN

The CLC has set up a Women's Bureau to deal with the problems of female workers. And the top priority of the office is fighting for equal pay for work of equal value and equal opportunity.

Mary Eady, director of the new bureau, told delegates at the February convention of Women in the Trades Association, held in Winnipeg, that while unions reflect society's negative attitudes towards women's work, they are becoming more willing to take action such as bargaining for better maternity leave.

The federal government has also taken some initiatives over the last few years, with the establishment of the Office of Equal Opportunities for Women (EOW), and the development of Affirmative Action programs. EOW is responsible for stimulating equal opportunities for women in employment policies, procedures and practices of the federal Public Service. Affirmative action programs (i.e., recruitment, training, promotion) are designed to improve the job opportunities of women working in the federal government. Meanwhile, individual provinces have begun their own affirmative action programs. In Ontario, the Women's Equal Opportunity in Employment Division of the Ministry of Labour has already assisted more than 150 major

corporations, in examining the structure of their workforces.

Efforts on the part of government, organized labour and the private sector are encouraging. But, as Mary Eady pointed out at the Women in the Trades Association convention, "It's relatively easy to pass a statement on policy. It's much harder to get that into the workplace."

"Employers need to do more, governments need to do more and unions need to do more."

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

In January and February several important conference meetings were held in Canada concerning the treatment of women in the labour force. The sponsoring groups included the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Ontario Ministry of Labour's Women's Bureau and the Women in the Trades Association.

The issues discussed in those meetings concentrated on equal pay for work of equal value and equal opportunity, both of which are related to Section II of the new Human Rights Act which is expected to take effect March 1.

What is the position of women in the labour force today? Freelance writer Maureen O'Hara considers this question in light of the recent meetings and legislation, which she has examined for this issue's WORKLIFE REPORT.



Public Archives

women want more opportunity in the trades

One employee fitness program that is entirely self-supporting is run by members of the Surveys and Mapping Branch of the Department of Energy Mines and Resources in Ottawa. Three times a week for the past five years the group has been meeting at 7 a.m. in a nearby high school gym. The members pay a professional instructor from yearly dues.

The man to consult about establishing an employee fitness program, Sandy Keir, manager of the Fitness section of Fitness and Amateur Sport, maintains that the two keys to a fitness program are accessibility and showers. By sticking to non-competitive forms of exercise like yoga and jogging, equipment requirements can be kept to a bare minimum.

## FEELING THE BENEFITS

A little ingenuity can go a long way in making do with what is available. At Bell Northern Research in Ottawa's west end a well-used trailer has been converted to provide a shower and locker-change room. A fitness trail runs through the woods on the BNR property providing participants with a good workout over and around logs, trees and rocks and up and down hills. Not satisfied to be active on the trail only part of the year, BNR Fitness Club members have since obtained the use of a nearby school gym for after work exercising.

The kind of incentives that motivate

fitness program members include mini-programs like the Confederation Heights Centurion Club, which keeps track of the number of miles run by each member per year. Others feature 100 miles in 100 days challenges, monthly marathons or community inspired events like the Ottawa Businessmen's Olympics, which is open to full-time employee groups only (no registered athletes are allowed).

The responses to the question "What do you get out of your program?" are as varied as the kinds of people taking part.

The answers range from pleasure over a new slimmer, trimmer figure, to money saved by not going shopping at noon. Some liked the refreshed feeling that set them up for an afternoon back at the office, while others found themselves better coordinated than they ever knew they were and embarking on other forms of sport activities.

As one jogger put it, "I gave up smoking, and the government lost the taxes I used to pay on that, now I'm healthier, I don't miss as many days at work and I'll probably live longer and use up more of my pension. In the meantime I'm having fun...you just can't lose any way you look at it."

Pat Hunter is a freelance-writer living and exercising in Ottawa.

# Teachers support labour history

by Karen Krangle

**Labour union. Strike. Picket line.**

Those words mean different things to different people. To some, they're as important as food on the table; to others, they're dirty words.

Why? Do people really understand what trade unionism is all about?

According to about 200 B.C. teachers, they don't. And part of the problem, the teachers believe, is that labour history and information are virtually left out of the school curriculum.

Last year, these teachers set up an association within the B.C. Teachers' Federation to research the subject and compile classroom materials relating to labour history.

So far, they've produced two slide-tape presentations and accompanying teachers' manuals; lesson plans; historical references; a glossary and a bibliography, and a newsletter for teachers.

Subjects discussed include the Winnipeg General strike of 1919, John A. Macdonald's Trade Union Act of 1872, and women in the labour force, to name a few.

Response to the material, which is now in use in local colleges and the B.C. Federation of Labour, has been

favourable. Requests for the teaching materials have come from as far away as Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Association president Frank Fuller thinks that knowledge of Canadian working people and trade unions is a definite asset in understanding both regional and national history.

"The eight-hour day, grievance procedures, workers' compensation are now an accepted part of our society. The struggle that was undertaken to place them in that context is a hidden heritage which the educational system has long neglected," he says.

While the teachers' association's material focuses on the labour history of B.C., it can serve as a model for local adaptation.

The slide-tape show carries interviews with local students asking them "Would you cross a picket-line? What do you think of labour unions?" combined with recorded stories from old timers, labour songs and a narrative.

The teacher's manual offers a script for a "mock" bargaining table situation, where students can act out the roles of unions and management.

Reprinted from the Vancouver Sun.

## workfacts

### Foley gets union post

William Foley, 53, one of Hamilton's foremost labour leaders, was appointed secretary treasurer of the 50,000-member United Textile Workers of America at the union's recent executive meeting in Miami.

Mr. Foley, who has served as Canadian director of the union and as assistant to international president, Francis Schaufel, will assume his new duties May 1.

As the union's second in command, Mr. Foley will be in line for the leadership when Mr. Schaufel steps down in 1980.

Canadians make up about one-fifth of the membership in the UTWVA but there is no feeling among Americans to block a Canadian from holding office, he said.

Mr. Foley said he hopes to foster understanding between American union leaders and the autonomous Canadian membership especially over such situations as the current debate on national unity.

About 55 per cent of the Canadian membership is in Quebec. Mr. Foley also said he was concerned about Canadian members whose jobs have been harder hit by textile imports than in the U.S. where imports hold 12 per cent of the market, compared to 50 per cent in Canada.



William Foley

### Now One Bargaining Unit

VANCOUVER — The Labour Relations Board of British Columbia has eliminated the possibility that a strike by one of the province's construction unions could shut down most of the industry with an order placing B.C.'s 17 construction unions into a single

unit for the purposes of collective bargaining.

Labour Minister Allan Williams instructed the board in December to investigate whether a joint council of trade unions was an appropriate bargaining unit for the construction industry.

Opposition to the move came from electrical workers, plumbers, cement masons, boiler-makers, laborers and heat and frost insulators, but board chairman, Paul Weiler, said he hopes the unions will voluntarily set up a joint council on the building trades.

Following the order, strike and contract ratification votes must be based on a majority decision of all tradesmen working for the Construction Labour Relations Association, which represents 850 contractors in the province.

## ONTARIO BOOSTS MINIMUM WAGE

Ontario's general minimum hourly wage will rise to \$2.85 on August 1 and to \$3.00 next January 1, Ontario Labour Minister Bette Stephenson announced last month.

The rate for construction workers, currently set at \$2.90 an hour, will jump to \$3.15 and \$3.25 on the same two dates.

The general minimum hourly wage will not be increased for persons serving alcoholic beverages in licensed establishments, because "persons affected receive substantial additional income through gratuities," said a labour ministry news release.

There will also be no increase in the minimum wage for students, now at \$2.15 an hour. The release said this was to increase student summer and part-time job opportunities.

### Provincial Minimum Wages

Province	Hourly Minimum Wage Level	Date Effective	Changes
Quebec	\$3.17	Jan. 1, 1978	
Saskatchewan	\$3.15	Jan. 1, 1978	
Alberta	\$2.90	Apr. 1, 1977	To \$3.25 June 30, 1978
British Columbia	\$3.00	June 1, 1978	
Northwest Territories	\$2.00	June 1, 1978	
Yukon	\$2.00	Apr. 1, 1978	
Manitoba	\$2.85	Sept. 1, 1977	
New Brunswick	\$2.80	Nov. 1, 1976	
New Scotia	\$2.75	Jan. 1, 1977	
Prince Edward Island	\$2.75	July 1, 1977	To \$2.75 July 1, 1978
Ontario	\$2.85	Aug. 15, 1978	To \$3.00 Aug. 1, 1979
Newfoundland	\$2.80	Jan. 1, 1978	
Federal	\$2.80	Jan. 1, 1978	



# PERSPECTIVES

## Wanted: income supplementation

by Leonard Shifrin

How many mouths should a minimum wage be able to feed?

According to the 11 governments, federal and provincial, that set Canada's minimum wage levels, the answer is evidently about two.

Forty hours' work, 52 weeks a year, at the highest minimum wage in the country — Quebec's \$3.27 an hour — produces an annual income of \$6,800. The same full year's work at Newfoundland's \$2.50 minimum wage, the country's lowest, comes to a little less than \$5,200.

Those figures more or less correspond to Statistics Canada's current poverty lines for a two-parent family, which range from \$4,800 in the most rural parts of the country to \$6,400 in our major metropolitan centers.

Since the average Canadian family consists of four people — two adults and two children — minimum wage levels are often fingered to explain why the working poor comprise more than half of Canada's poverty population.

Certainly that was the view of the recent Ontario Federation of Labour convention which called for a 70 per cent increase in the province's minimum wage — from \$2.65 to \$4.50 — in order to bring working families out of poverty.

That would mean \$9,300 in a year, roughly matching the big city poverty line for a family of four...but not for a family of five. Likewise \$5.00 an hour would reach the poverty line for a five-member family, but not for a family of six.



"If prices keep climbing at this rate, I'll have to use the cart for bringing money, and my purse for carrying the groceries!"

And the assumption of year-round, full-time employment for minimum wage workers clinging to the margin of the job market is rather dubious — particularly at a time when Canada's unemployment rate is the highest it has been since the Depression.

It is now ten years since the Economic Council revealed the dimensions of poverty among Canadian workers, seven years since the Senate Poverty Committee underlined it, and five years since the federal and provincial governments launched their late-lamented social security review to do something about it.

According to the 1973 Orange Paper with which Ottawa initiated that review, the working poor are in poverty because of the lack of any form of supplementation for wages that are inadequate to the size of the families they have to support, compounded by the periods of less than full employment to which they are subject.

That's no less true today than it was then. Nor are we any closer to doing anything about it.

Prospects for the alternate approach of a federally administered supplement in the form of a refundable tax credit for workers with incomes below the tax-paying threshold are reputedly still alive, but living quietly in limbo.

Much of the blame for the fruitless decade of frenetic inaction can clearly be laid at the door of governments. But much of it also lies with those whose championing of the needs of the working poor has proven so consistently underwhelming.

There has been the occasional perfunctory call for a "guaranteed income" — something that has come to mean so many different things to different people that it has become effectively meaningless. But there has never been a concerted campaign for what the guaranteed income idea was originally conceived to do, namely, supplement the incomes of those below poverty lines to lift them out.

That's something minimum wages, whatever their level, can't do even in combination with a permanent state of absolutely full employment. And the income supplementation that could do it isn't likely to happen without a whole lot more vigorous support than it has gotten to date.



Leonard Shifrin, whose column on social policy appears in a number of Canadian newspapers, is a lawyer and former director of National Council of Welfare.

## STRIKE RECORD

by Gordon Pitts

For the last ten years, Canada has been building an unenviable reputation as a fiery battleground of strike-happy workers and inflexible management.

International Labour Organization figures show Canada is right up there with Italy in time lost per worker in industrial disputes.

### CANADIANS NOT STRIKE-HAPPY

Now there are indications that last year's strike figures were better, which should cause some people to conclude Canada is solving its labour problems.

"We are all numbers-mad," says Paul Malles, an industrial relations specialist. "While the numbers may be correct, we should be looking behind them."

Malles, a 72-year-old economic researcher and former journalist, says Canada's strike problem has resulted from long, non-recurring strikes in

certain industries, affecting an extremely small percentage of the labour force.

In the 1970-74 period, for example, there were 863 days lost per 1,000 workers in Canada. Only Italy with 1,517, had a worse record among major industrial countries.

But figures from some European countries do not include days lost by political strike or the large number of wildcat walkouts.

Furthermore, only 4.2 per cent of the Canadian work force was involved in strikes, compared with 28.9 per cent in Austria or 40 per cent in Italy.

That's not the picture of a strike-happy labour force or unreasonable management.

The social security review's prospect of provincially run wage supplementation programs, to which Ottawa would contribute two-thirds of the cost, collapsed last year when only three of the ten provinces agreed to set up programs.

"To talk about a crisis in our collective bargaining system, that it doesn't work, is nonsense," Malles says.

But what causes the long, crippling strikes like the one that hit the pulp and paper industry two years ago? "I don't know," the pipe-smoking, professorial Malles admits freely. "We know extremely little about the causes of industrial conflict."

In some cases, he says, it's in the interest of management to prolong the strike. It's often easier and cheaper to go through a strike than to lay people off in a weak industry.

As for the paperworkers' strike, "It is hard to imagine that the industry would have tolerated it if it had been in a market situation where a strike

would have really damaged the industry.

"Don't equate time lost with economic loss."

He suggests that it is accepted in North American bargaining to fight to the bitter and without concern for the public interest. Also, collective bargaining begins with a lack of realism, both sides pushing for things they know are impossible to negotiate.

Or the problem may lie in the complexity of the bargaining process, whereby negotiations continue beyond the life of the old contract, creating feelings of frustration.

He acknowledges labour's argument that the frequent use of strike-breakers by management during a legal strike, something frowned upon in most European countries, prolongs a conflict almost endlessly.

(continued on page 10)

Mallies says he doesn't have all the answers to the 10-year "conflict cycles" in Canadian industry, but we should be studying the phenomenon.

One thing he vehemently opposes is the imposition in Canada of some rigid structure for making decisions on the economic direction of Canada, such as a tripartite council.

Mallies says he believes in consultation between business, labour and government groups, but a forum for such consultation should act only as an advisory group, not as a decision-making body.

He is skeptical of bureaucrats and unionists who fudge off to Sweden or Germany for a month, fall in love with what they see, and come home to preach to the unconvinced.

The kind of centralized bargaining and consultative processes that emerged in Europe were not imposed from above. They came from a consensus — "social pacts" — that already existed, arising from the need

to reconstruct economies ravaged by totalitarianism in the 1930's, then war in the '40's.

More centralized bargaining and some form of consultation are inevitable in Canada, Mallies says, despite the absence of a strong employers' association. But they will evolve slowly and not to the degree they have in Europe.

"I can see wider bargaining, probably frame bargaining — general principles in a general agreement but actual collective bargaining on a local level."

Mallies is glad, because he equates the power of the single union and the union local with greater individual freedom. And Canada, he says, "is the freest country in the world."

He says economists and the press put too much emphasis on wages as a cause of labour disputes. In the post-controls period, with the Canadian economy in a downturn, job security will be the key question in negotiations, along with related issues like early retirement and shorter working hours.

Reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen.

## SOVIET WORKERS WANT UNION

MOSCOW — Six spokesmen from a group of Soviet blue-collar workers, technicians and engineers who are seeking support from the International Labour Organization to form an unofficial trade union, told Western correspondents in Moscow during late January that they would rely mainly on international public opinion to make their movement known and to stop Soviet authorities from "busting" it.

The spokesmen said that some 200 people have written to express the wish to join the union, committed to the "defence of workers' rights in the Soviet Union."

Potential members are from the ranks of the unemployed; many have been jobless for two or more years because they claim they have protested about various "wrong-doings by management". These include thefts, embezzlement, non-compliance with safety rules, etc.

The right of workers to free assembly is recognized by both the ILO, of which the Soviet Union is a member, and the Soviet Constitution. The spokesmen said that despite the risks involved, they feel the establishment of such a union is the only way for Soviet workers to defend themselves.

They said that all other avenues of redress had been tried before this, including petitions to the Communist Party's Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet, but without success and at great personal risk to themselves and their families.

One of the spokesmen, Vladimir Klebanov, said he was fired from the Donbass Mines after complaining about dangerous working conditions. He was then interned for four years in a psychiatric hospital and harassed by members of the KGB on his release.

**THE LABOUR GAZETTE** — a monthly magazine devoted to labour affairs — provides its readers with a balanced perspective on the entire work-related scene. Articles cover a broad spectrum of timely issues ranging from the quality of working life to the arbitration process to the state of the economy and much more.

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## Remembering Child Labour

Do the pictures you see here remind you of Oliver Twist, or Fagin's gang or any other lost souls that Charles Dickens wrote about in the late 19th century? Remember the "newsboys" and the "shoe-blacks"? Child labour, like many other "sins of industry", was a controversial issue in the late 1800's when social and industrial reforms were being demanded by the public, particularly by the rising trade union movement.

The exploitation of children and women was most blatant in the rapidly industrialized textile industries, such as cotton mills. Glass, tobacco and cigar factories, mines, and manufacturing industries

Following are excerpts of that report, dated 1889:

### EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN

In some parts of the Dominion the employment of children of very tender years is still permitted. This injures the health, stunts the growth and prevents the proper education of such children, so that they cannot become healthy men and women or intelligent citizens. It is believed that the regular employment in mills, factories and mines of children less than 14 years of age should be strictly forbidden.

Remember the "newsboys" and the "shoe-blacks"?

Public Archives



Public Archives

The first Factory Acts restricting child labour were enacted in Ontario and Quebec in the 1880's, but were not enforced

were the main employers of children. In trades, such as tailoring and carpentering, boys were barely ten when they were brought in as apprentices. Newsboys became another highly celebrated case of child labour. The average wage paid children in some industries was 25 cents a day, compared to wages exceeding a dollar paid to skilled workers — men. Many were employed for night work.

Legislation restricting the employment of children under 12 was enacted in Ontario and Quebec in the early 1880's but was not enforced. Factory Acts, restricting the hours of work, child labour, and regulating other conditions of work were proposed in almost every session of the federal parliament in the 1880's, but never enacted.

There were two Royal Commissions of enquiry into industrial practices in the 1880's. The second Commission was the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour, 1886-1889. Its proceedings and report are a classic of Canadian social history and contain recommendations relating to child labour.

### FACTORY LEGISLATION

...In addition to their mental injury, there is also the physical ills which naturally follow upon a too early application to continuous work in the close-confined atmosphere of badly ventilated work-rooms.

...To remedy this evil it is demanded that the employment of children, of either sex, under 14 years of age, be strictly forbidden; that factories in which women and children are employed shall not commence work before 7 o'clock, a.m.; that the hours of child and female labour shall not exceed fifty-four in one week or more than ten in any one day, and that night work be prohibited in all cases for children 16 years of age.

*And I'll preach and I'll preach it,  
Till I set our people wild,  
Against the heartless, reckless grasping  
Of the men who kill my child.*

— Palladium of Labour  
Hamilton, Ontario.  
March 3, 1883



# labour scene

## At the Crossroads

by Ed Finn

To say that the Canadian labour movement in the spring of 1978 is "at the crossroads" would be more true than trite. Cramped and frustrated by nearly three years of wage controls, the unions are emerging into a post-controls period that in some ways may be even more perilous.

The decisions labour leaders make and the directions they choose in the months ahead could revitalize the movement and make it an influential social and economic force. Or they could push it into a blind alley of irrelevance and decline.

It all depends on whether, or to what extent, unions can adapt to a rapidly changing world. If they make the mistake of assuming that the mere lifting of formal wage controls on April 14 will whisk them back to the pre-controls era, with all its collective bargaining freedoms and rituals, they will embrace a delusion that is not only dangerous, but potentially disastrous.

Most labour leaders are intelligent enough to realize they can't turn back the clock. But old traditions and practices aren't easily discarded by unions.

On the other hand, rank and file unionists — apart from the ideologues — are generally more educated and open-minded than ever before. In many unions they may be ready, after the sobering experience of controls, to give new ideas and methods a trial.

### RESTRAINT AHEAD

The signs are unmistakable that "free collective bargaining" will not be restored after controls come off. The Anti-Inflation Board is to be replaced by a monitoring agency that, despite a lack of rollback muscle, will prove almost as effective in restraining wage gains. The recouping of wages denied by the AIB has specifically been prohibited by the decontrols legislation.

The federal and provincial governments seem united behind a policy of keeping public employees' pay levels behind those of comparable groups in private industry. A formula — average comparability of total compensation (ACTC) — has been devised to achieve that objective. No matter how it is applied, it will effectively do away with what has passed for collective bargaining in the public sector.

No doubt the labour movement will attempt to mobilize its members' opposition to continuing restraints

and translate it into votes in the upcoming federal election. A political threat, after all, demands a political response. All previous efforts to deliver the "labour vote," however, have flopped, except in a few heavily industrialized ridings, and there is little reason to expect that unionists will vote as a bloc in this one, either. Regardless of how much manpower and money the unions throw into it.

Even if the federal Liberal government were toppled, the provincial governments, which have jurisdiction over four-fifths of the public sector, would presumably still go ahead with implementation of the ACTC formula.

The realistic prospect for labour, then, is that the pay, benefits and working conditions of most of their members will increasingly be determined more by formulas, comparisons, laws and regulations than by contract negotiations.

That doesn't mean unions will become redundant. Indeed, it is conceivable that workers in a more regulated system may need unions more than ever — if the unions can develop the different kinds of services their members will need in future. These will have more to do with the processing and interpretation of data, and the development of expertise in specialized fields, than with the brute simplicities of confrontation.

### NEW ROLE

Unions may have to "disarm" and replace their soldiers with statisticians. They may have to become more consumer-oriented, offering a wide range of counselling to members on everything from household budgeting to proper nutrition. Union funds may have to be used to provide low-cost housing and day-care facilities.

Some unions already are moving in this direction. They're getting more involved in improving on-the-job safety, in helping victims of alcoholism, in combatting pollution.

The adversary system, however, is still favoured by most union officers. As long as most employers adhere to it, and as long as it remains the basis of Canada's labour legislation, the unions really can't deviate from it to any great extent, no matter how outmoded it may become in practice.

The apparent collapse of initiatives to establish some form of tripartite consultative mechanism in Canada also makes it difficult for the labour



After wage and price controls, where to for labour?

movement to moderate its pugnacity. The choice seems to be between consultation or conflict, with no possible middle ground.

Still, there are grounds for optimism. The concept of tripartism — perhaps under another name — will probably be revived as its need becomes more obvious. There is reason to believe that many union leaders have kept open minds on the subject, and would be prepared to explore its feasibility when present hostilities fade.

We should take note, too, of the long

history and durability of the labour movement. It has proved its capacity in the past to evolve and change when convinced that change was needed. Its survival instinct is well-honed. Union leaders also have a well-developed sense of self-preservation. That, if nothing else, will ensure that they make the required effort to save their organizations from the obsolescence that will otherwise engulf them.

Ed Finn is public relations director for the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers, and a regular columnist for the Toronto Star.

## HOW DO WE RATE?

WORKLIFE is new and experimental. It has two principal objectives — first to serve as a communication link among people working in industrial relations throughout Canada, and second, to highlight initiatives and events which reflect a problem-solving approach to employee-employer relations. We would like to provide you with a wide variety of information from workplaces in Canada, and this issue — the second — attempts to do just that.

What do you think we could improve? Please help us put out a first-rate product by rating the articles contained in this issue. (Rate them by number from 1 to 10, 10 being "excellent"; 5 "worth reading" and 1, "not worth reading"). Your participation will be appreciated.

### ARTICLES

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3. Working Things Out in Mackenzie
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Employee ☐ Supervisor ☐ Manager ☐ Union official ☐  
Government Official ☐ Academic ☐ Other ☐

Comments

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# BOOK REVIEW

## The Retirement Threat

by Tony Lamb and Dave Duffy,  
J.P. Tarcher, Inc., Los Angeles, 1977, 177pp.

*The Retirement Threat*, in spite of its title, is an optimistic sort of book. Author Tony Lamb is a self-styled senior activist whose main aim is to show readers how they can plan for a more comfortable, happy retirement by avoiding the pitfalls that threaten and victimize many of the retired today.

In a factual, non-sentimental way, Lamb describes the poverty and other misfortunes that befall more seniors than most of us realize. These are largely the result of what he calls the "Great Retirement Lie" — the romanticized picture painted by popular books and magazines, which suggest "...that retirement is something you don't have to worry about until you are in your sixties, and then your pension or Uncle Sam will take care of you."

Lamb sets the record straight by telling us some of the sobering facts about retirement: retired persons are the fastest-growing poverty group in the United States and one out of six lives in poverty; most retired widows live in, or close to, poverty; middle- and upper-middle-class people often suffer the greatest shock when their standard of living drops dramatically in retirement.

We can reverse these trends, says Lamb, if we each plan carefully for our own retirement, and if we become more aware of seniors' needs, regardless of our own age: "If you, the non-retired, passively accept the climate in which today's retired

must struggle for survival, then you, the future retired, will deserve that inheritance. In twenty years or less you, too, may find yourself poor and powerless," (p. 114).

The chapters that follow are brief and informative "how to" articles on everything from budgeting and getting the most out of social security, pension, and so on, to health and nutrition, employment opportunities for the retired and fighting for seniors' rights.

Lamb gives easy-to-follow, action-oriented advice based on his own extensive experience as a senior citizen organizer in California's Ventura County. He describes the many benefits he was able to achieve for fellow retirees by following his own "organize, plan and persevere" formula.

Although *The Retirement Threat* occasionally has a Dale Carnegie-esque air about it, as the author prescribes his remedy for successful seniorhood, it nonetheless makes worthwhile reading. For most of us the book is likely to be a revelation. It will certainly make you think twice about your own future, and hopefully it will also get you thinking about the forgotten, grey-haired minority in our society.

— M.C. O'Rourke

\*Courtesy of the Labour Gazette



It's important to plan for retirement

## ABILITY IS AGELESS

A year-long effort to tap the abilities of people over 55 has made an Independent employment agency in Vancouver a success story.

Len Willoughby, 71, a "retired" personnel manager, set up the Older Persons Employment Project last April with the assistance of federal grants and since then has found 280 jobs for persons over 55.

"Our motto is 'ability is ageless'," Willoughby told Worklife recently.

About 800 people have registered with the agency, located in down-

town Vancouver, which offers a job search training program. Most of the jobs they are seeking involve sales, clerical, housekeeping or janitorial work.

Four counsellors, all over 50 themselves, assist the job-seekers, many of whom suffer from lack of self-esteem and boredom in their lives.

Says Willoughby, "We're concentrating on one age group — that's our expertise. 'My dream is that it could be done on a national basis.'"

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## EMPHASIZING THE PERSON Not the Product

That soul-destroying, meaningless, mechanical, monotonous, moronic work is an insult to human nature which must necessarily and inevitably produce either escapism or aggression, and that no amount of 'bread and circuses' can compensate for the damage done — these are the facts which are neither denied nor acknowledged but are met with an unbreakable conspiracy of silence — because to deny them would be too obviously absurd and to acknowledge them would condemn the central preoccupation of modern society as a crime against humanity.

— E.F. Schumacher in  
*Small is Beautiful*

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